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ABSTRACT

This theoretical paper explores the implications of some modifications and extensions of the Transactional Analysis (TA) theory of personality and attempts to understand some specific aspects of human nature and behavior in evolutionary terms. "Ego State" as used in TA designates both a structural and functional unit of the personality. The term, "State", refers structurally to a unit of the personality and functionally to a condition of that unit. This paper refers to the structural unit as an Ego Sub-System. The functional unit is referred to as an Ego State Role which is the mechanism whereby the subunits of the Ego Sub-Systems are organized into relatively stable functional units. Among the major assumptions are: more than one Sub-System may be, and typically is, active at a time and each contributes to the quality of the transaction; developmentally and evolutionarily, the Child appears first, then the Adult; the Parent appears last and is an outgrowth and specialization of the Adult, and is specifically related to mankind's heritage of having been a social carnivore; for each major sub-unit of the Child there is a reciprocal and corresponding sub-unit in the Parent. The survival value of guilt and anxiety are briefly explored in relation to human evolutionary theory. (Author)

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TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS MODEL:

MODIFIED AND EXTENDED

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The Transactional Analysis Model: Modified and Extended

OVERVIEW

This paper, theoretical in nature, will attempt to explore the implications of some modifications and extensions of the Transactional Analysis theory of personality. These are based upon a series of fourteen explicit assumptions which will be stated below.

The term "Ego State" has been used in Transactional Analysis to designate both a structural and functional unit of the personality. The term "State" structurally refers to a unit or division of the personality and functionally to a condition of that unit. By definition, this includes only one of the structural units, Parent, Adult, or Child.

In contrast, in this paper the structural unit will be referred to as an Ego Sub-System, which, in turn, can be further differentiated into smaller sub-units in a manner similar to those in Lewin's Field Theory. The functional unit is very similar to Berne's definition of an Ego State as "A consistent pattern of feeling and experience directly related to a corresponding consistent pattern of behavior". This unit will be referred to as an Ego State Role. In a transaction, the characteristics of the role in which the person is then functioning depend upon the degree to which the various sub-units of the three Sub-Systems have been activated. Depending upon the momentary, dynamic conditions of the total personality and the conditions of the environment with which it is interacting, one or more sub-units of the Sub-Systems may be sufficiently activated to influence the Ego State Role. While one sub-unit may be most influential, others also make a contribution to the nature of the transaction.

As the Ego Sub-Systems become increasingly differentiated into sub-units through maturation and learning, more complex

and varied behavior becomes possible. As differentiation increases, there is a corresponding need for increased organization of both the Sub-Systems and total personality if they are to function in an integrated fashion. The Ego State Role is the mechanism whereby the sub-units of the Ego Sub-Systems are organized into relatively stable functional units.

Finally, the survival value of guilt and anxiety will be briefly explored in evolutionary terms.

Assumption I: The human psyche consists of three major units or divisions referred to as Ego Sub-Systems; these are all mutually contiguous structurally and functionally rather than having the Adult located between and separating the Parent and Child. (See Figure 1)

Assumption II: More than one Sub-System may be, and typically is, active at a time, and each contributes to the quality of the transaction.

Assumption III: The contribution of each Sub-System and its relative importance in influencing the characteristics of the transaction are variable because of the dynamic quality of the Sub-Systems.

Assumption IV: All sub-units of any Sub-System are not actively involved in any given transaction but only those necessary to conduct the transaction.

The following example is a description, not an explanation, of a transaction sequence; the rationale will be discussed later. A hungry boy comes to his mother for food; both his Needy Child and Adult are active, a bipartite Ego State Role. The boy is responding to the biological needs in his Child, and this provides the motivating force for initiating the transaction. The Adult is also active since the cognitive processes of the Adult are involved in the boy's going to his mother rather than to his younger sister, his pet dog,

or the mailman. The boy is behaving in what he has learned to be the most probable way of getting food. The mother in turn is responding from all three Sub-Systems, a tripartite Ego State Role. The Nurturing unit of her Parent has been energized in response to her own Needy Child having first been activated by an empathic process. This has to do with reciprocity of Roles which will be stated in Assumption XI. She knows and remembers what it is like to be hungry and helpless because she herself has experienced that condition. (See Figure 2). Her Adult has been activated in response to the tension within the Nurturing Parent to do something. She then takes appropriate steps to feed her son, if her Nurturing Parent has been sufficiently activated.

However, if the mother is tired or irritable so that her empathic response to her son's Needy Child is diminished, instead of responding from her Needy Child/Nurturing Parent/ Adult, her Inadequate Feeling (the preferred nomenclature for Hurt or Vulnerable) Child may be activated. This in turn will activate her Critical Parent and then her Adult, but the result will be quite different. She may holler at him, spank him or even ignore him. (See Figure 3). In response, the boy may now cry because his Inadequate Feeling Child has become activated, and also because tension in his Needy Child is building up. He remains hungry, at least for the time being. Thus a crossed transaction, somewhat different from Berne's use of the term, occurs because communication in the sense of being constructively problem-solving oriented breaks down, even though the transaction was parallel between Child and Parent.

Assumption V: A transaction is crossed not only if it is non-complementary, but also if the anticipated Ego State Role in the other is not sufficiently activated.

Another possible outcome of the above example is that both the Critical Parent and the Nurturing Parent of the mother

may be activated. In this case she would feed him but might harshly say something like, "Here's your food but don't spill it like you always do." The boy would get fed but would have an accompanying"Not OK" feeling (See Figure 4).

Assumption VI: Developmentally the Child appears first and is minimally functional before birth.

Assumption VII: The Adult may be primitively functional before birth, but it makes its more obvious appearance in the first several weeks after birth as the infant begins exploring itself and its immediate environment, Life Space (K. Lewin).

The Child and Adult are conceptualized in a somewhat, but not strictly, traditional way. The Child is the biological system and includes feelings, remembered feelings, and other experiences. The Adult includes such functions as sensory input, data processing and storage, and probability estimating. Just as the foetus develops from a single, relatively undifferentiated fertilized egg into an increasingly more complex and differentiated bio-system, so does each of the Sub-Systems. After birth, the Child and Adult become increasingly more differentiated, which in turn increases the need for an organizational structure (K. Lewin).

Assumption VIII: The Parent is an outgrowth of and specialization of the Adult and appears last both evolutionarily and developmentally.

This is analogous to embryological development in which the epiblast and hypoblast appear first. The former develops into the ectoderm while the latter divides and develops into the endoderm and mesoderm.

Assumption IX: The function of the Parent is to monitor and regulate behavior, initially in oneself and later in others also.

The Parent becomes functional when the youngster is first capable of making some value judgments about its own behavior

according to criteria it has learned from significant others. The Parent is a repository of values, attitudes, obligations, expectations and preconceptions that are largely archaic in that they were believed and incorporated at an age when the Adult was insufficiently developed and knowledgeable to examine them critically. They are useful to the extent that they have adaptive and survival value ("Don't ever play near that saber-toothed tiger's den again!","Don't point a bow and arrow at anybody unless you intend to kill him").

In part, education consists in learning how to examine critically the archaic values and attitudes present in the Parent. As these are examined in light of current facts and experiences they may become incorporated into the Adult. Jerome Frank's concepts of the Assumptive World and Re-interpreted History are relevent here. The Assumptive World consists of the largely unexamined (archaic) values and attitudes (in the Parent) that influence and may render less effective (contaminate) intellectual functioning (of the Adult). Re-interpreted History is related to the re-interpretation or re-structuring of past events in the light of how we presently perceive those circumstances; this may or may not have contaminating qualities. The recent efforts to state more accurately the role of the Blacks in American history is an example of non-contaminating Re-interpreted History.

Another function of the Parent is to make judgments about the appropriateness of past, present or anticipated behavior, judged in the light of the consequences to <u>both</u> the individual and the group.

Mayr contends that man's early ancestors gradually came down from the trees in the tropical rain forests to compete more effectively for the dwindling and changing food supplies resulting from changing climatic conditions. Man slowly evolved into a social carnivore, eventually hunting the large grazing animals that occupied the savannas. To do this

effectively necessitated an increased capacity for planning and organizing, for complex, symbolic communication processes, and for co-operative effort. This last meant that often it was essential for a member of the group to forego the satisfaction of his immediate needs in deference to the welfare of the group. An internal balancing mechanism was required, something that could successfully compete with the strength and immediacy of the individual's basic biological and psychological drives and needs. The mechanism had to be operative even when the other group members were not present.

This mechanism was the capacity to make judgments about the appropriateness of behavior and to experience feelings of guilt if the behavior were contrary to the values of the group. Guilt is defined as: the sense of having done something contrary to prescribed behavior. Since guilt is an unpleasant experience, the desire to avoid it would help deter behavior that would jeopardize the group's survival.

Assumption X: Guilt, or more precisely a feeling of guilt, has survival value and is related to man's history of having been a social carnivore.

If early man had not developed this capacity to put the common good ahead of the individual at times, he might never have survived in his competitive stuggle for food. Thus, guilt had and has survival value. If the above analysis is accurate, this capacity is a relatively recent development in evolutionary terms. The locus for the initiation and control of this judgment function would then be in the most recently developed sections of the cerebral cortex although other parts of the brain would also be involved in the experiencing of feelings of guilt.

As with most human characteristics that are the result of the interaction between genetic and environmental factors (intelligence, weight, musical ability, for example) it

seems probable that the overall capacity for and the actual experiencing of guilt are not equally present in all members of the species. Some individuals are born with a greater capacity for experiencing guilt, which may be further increased by environmental factors (training). These individuals may be the "guilt-ridden neurotics" that are seen clinically. In contrast, some individuals, such as psychopaths, are born with a serious deficiency in their capacity to experience guilt.

Kortlandt contends that wolves, and their cousins, dogs, have the capacity to experience guilt because they too are or have been social carnivores, whereas felines probably do not experience guilt feelings. While presently there is no known way to ask a dog if he feels guilty and to get an answer, at the risk of anthropomorphizing, a dog certainly "looks" guilty when it has just done or is about to do something of which its owner disapproves. Typically, cat owners do not describe their pets in this fashion.

While guilt is thus seen as having survival value in light of man's evolutionary history, both a serious excess or deficiency of it would be maladaptive. An excess results in a person's reluctance to satisfy comfortably legitimate individual needs (a "pardon me for living" attitude); a deficiency results in an individual's satisfying all needs regardless of the consequences to others (a "to hell with everyone else" attitude).

<u>Assumption XI:</u> For each major unit of the Child there is a corresponding and reciprocal unit of the Parent.

Examples of this are Needy Child, and Nurturing Parent; and Inadequate Feeling Child and Critical Parent. This reciprocity of roles and functioning is related to the Gestalt concept of getting in touch with the opposites within us.

Parents need to teach their offspring effectively what potentially dangerous situations to avoid. Punishment is

an effective way to teach a lesson although it is not the only or always the best way. When the infant, or grown-up, is punished, ideally the intent is to eradicate behavior which at that time is detrimental to the individual and/or group welfare. The infant and, to a lesser extent, adolescent and grown-up, need the approval of other members of the group for survival and are thus fearful of being abandoned or rejected by the group for disapproved behavior. This is seen as existential anxiety. If the youngster feels inadequate, that is, incapable of gaining conditional love, it will modify its behavior to gain the desired approval in order to survive.

Assumption XII: The survival function of the Critical Parent is to prevent and control behavior which might lead to existential anxiety.

This reciprocity of Critical Parent and Inadequate Feeling Child has to do with the grown-ups' response to the infant's utter dependency and its need for a prolonged nurturing, training and educational program. This response may be referred to as Conditional Love. Because parents too need the continuing approval of the group, they are threatened if their offspring does things unacceptable to or dangerous to the group. Thus, their Inadequate Feeling Child is activated, which, in turn, activates their Critical Parent, and they take steps to modify their offspring's behavior.

As mentioned previously, the Needy Child activates empathically the Nurturing Parent in the "concerned others". This is necessary in all mammals and other animals in which the newborn needs caring for. If the mother does not respond to her young's need for food, the young would not survive. In so-called lower animals, those that appeared sooner on the evolutionary scene, this response is largely instinctual and the behavior is usually stereotypic. In man, in whom there are few instinctual responses, there is an analagous

mechanism, the precise nature of which is as yet unclear. It is tentatively referred to as empathy; i.e., the capacity to respond to the felt need of the other.

Assumption XIII: The survival function of the Nurturing Parent is to respond to the felt need of the other, i.e. Needy Child

Those individuals in whom this response is lacking or seriously deficient, are continually being bred out of the species. In addition to the genetic nature of the nurturing response, learning also plays a significant role. A mother may put her hungry infant to her breast, but any responsible and "concerned other" can also feed her infant with a bottle. Males as well as females have a Nurturing Parent role. Although males lack the necessary biological equipment to satisfy the infant's biological hunger directly, they are capable of other nurturing behavior.

A photograph appeared several months ago in some newspapers and news magazines. It represents the prototype of a Nurturing Parent role, but as a photograph its meaning goes far beyond that. It also typifies that rare human response, Unconditional Love, the capacity to give of oneself without reservation in the caring for the other. The caption reads, "Making a futile demand on her own emaciated body, an African mother tries vainly to nurse son, near death from starvation in drought-stricken Mauretania".

It is a debatable question if there is such a thing as innate "Mother Love" or more generically "Parental Love". Reflecting my male bias, I don't want to be left out. However, it seems probable that women, as a group, have a greater capacity for experiencing parental love than men. There seems to be some people of both sexes who are significantly deficient in this quality while others seem to have an abundance of it. The capacity for caring or nurturing, like guilt, is presumed to be a function of both genetic and environmental factors. Thus, it would variably be present in all members of the species.

Harlow's experiments with monkeys do not necessarily demonstrate that female monkeys lack an innate nurturing response but only that certain conditions are necessary for this capacity to develop.

In addition to the Inadequate Feeling Child: Critical Parent and Needy Child: Nurturing Parent, examples of other reciprocal roles of the Child and Parent are Curious Child: Teaching Parent and Believing Child: Preaching Parent.

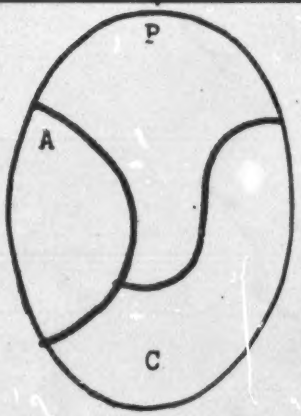
Regarding the latter, Waddington states that "...man is born to believe". This statement is made in the context of his discussion of the long period of dependency of the human from infancy through adolescence and the absence of instinctual responses to a large variety of environmental situations. While experience may be a great teacher, the learning process sometimes proves fatal. If the human youngster had to learn everything through direct, personal experience, it just would not survive. Thus, the young (and to some extent the older) human has to "believe" to survive. He has to believe that someone else has the answer, since his intellectual ability and experience are inadequate for him to reason out the most appropriate responses to a large number of unfamiliar situations. He also has to believe that something which happened in the past that he did not experience is "true".

Like most other qualities, a moderate amount of faith is desirable, but too much or too little is undesirable. The extent to which we all, at times, believe rather blindly and unquestioningly in religious, political and even scientific dogmas all too clearly demonstrates both the universality of this characteristic in man and the maladaptive effect when it is misdirected. While it is natural and adaptive for man to believe, so too is it natural to question, since this permits man to try different responses to new and changing situations in the constant quest for finding more adaptive responses.

Assumption XIV: The functions of all Ego Sub-Systems and Ego State Roles involve survival behaviors of the organism in its interaction with its natural and cultural environment.

The exploration of the survival values of other human characteristics such as depression and the unconscious, are beyond the scope of this paper, but these are seen as being inextricably related to the evolution of the human brain, which, in turn, is related to man's constant attempt to adjust to an ever changing environment. Man, like all other species, is a natural experiment, a balance of the strengths and weaknesses in the struggle for survival. But, he uniquely responds to the supportive and hostile elements of both his natural and cultural environment. Man's recorded history suggests that he has been more successful lately in modifying his environment and therefore influencing his culture than in genetically adapting to these modifications.

Figure 1



KEY TO SYMBOLS

CN	Needy Child
PN	Nurturing Parent
CIF	Inadequate Feeling Child
PC	Critical Parent

Figure 2

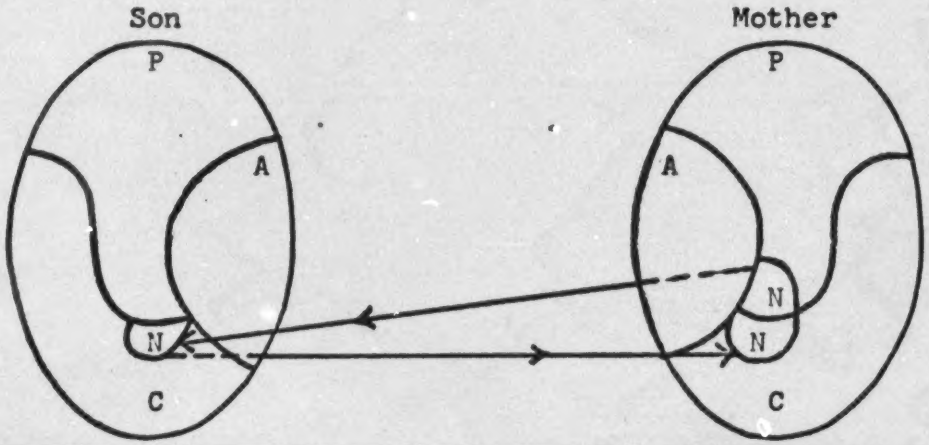


Figure 3

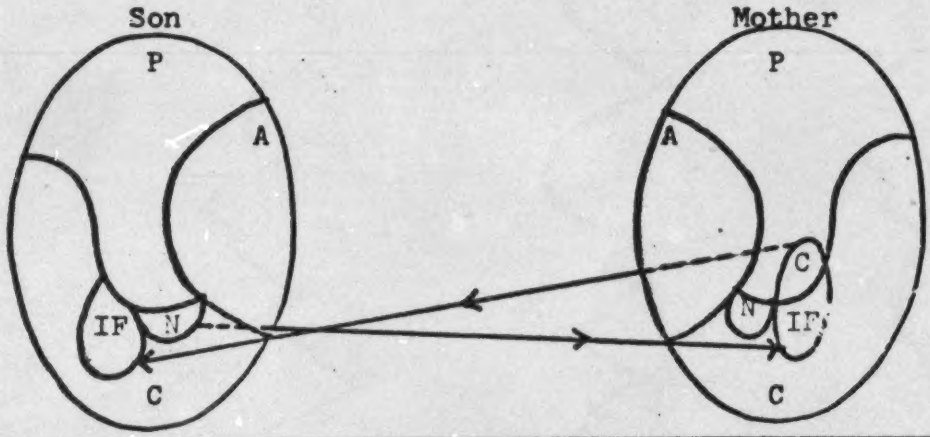
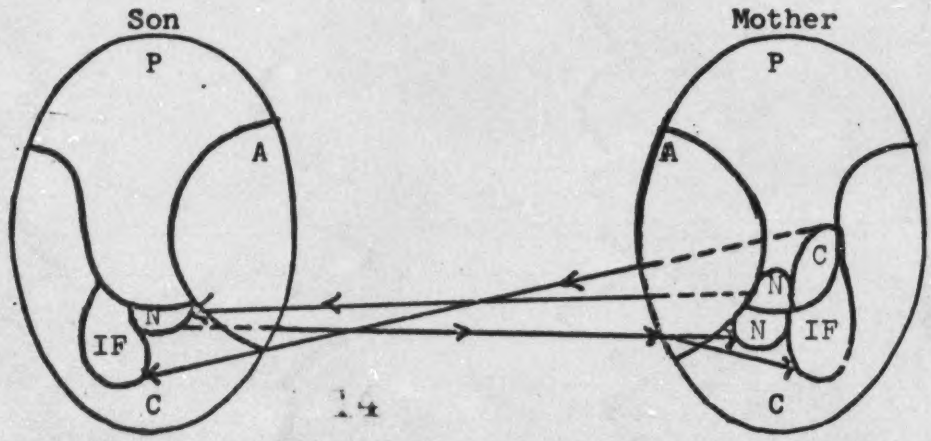


Figure 4



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